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## DIVERSE TOPICS.

### HEGEL'S MONISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

Looking back upon the history of ideas in the past and noting the ever-changing waves of opinion, the different systems of philosophy, the rise and fall of religions, we are moved by a strong desire to find out if there is not a single principle the truth of which has been demonstrated by its capacity of endurance and by the endurance of all that has been its logical outcome. There has been a universal belief that such a principle exists holding good in philosophy, religion, and ethics which would form the foundation for an enduring and world-wide system. Amongst the Greeks this belief first found expression in the teaching of the Ionic philosophers, for them this mysterious fundamental principle was a material one—Water, Air, Fire. The Pythagoreans had Form for this principle; following upon the Pythagoreans came the Eleatics, their principle was Pure Being; the system of the Eleatics was the first attempt at Monism, but an unsuccessful one withal, because it ignored the world of sense instead of absorbing it. From the very earliest time every system of philosophy has been vitiated by a persistently recurring dualism, in all there was an endless antagonism between the material and the spiritual, between the world of sense and the world of ideas. Could the Eleatics have found a ground of union between Pure Being and the sensible world, or Plato between his ideas and the world of sense, a monistic philosophy would have been the result. About the year 400 B. C. we have Xenophanes the Eleatic propounding the proposition that "all is one," and his follower Zeno teaching the doctrine "of the one sole, simple, and immutable being"; but they could not retain the monistic idea, nor build it up into a definite philosophical system; Pure Being and Phenomenal Being were unreconciled, and until a reconciliation was brought about their philosophy could be only a badly concealed dualism. Even the master mind of Socrates could not discover the necessary connexion between the different branches of philosophy, so he was content to devote his whole time to problems of ethics and the social life of man.

The life of the Greek people as a whole owed its temporary joyousness to its complete unconsciousness of the inherent difference between the material and the spiritual. Their gods, their state, and their national life were all so closely bound

together that the people were rendered incapable of looking, as it were, at things as outside of, or as separate from, themselves. When their self-consciousness did develop sufficiently to enable them to distinguish between things spiritual and material, their light-hearted joyousness disappeared, not having had any better foundation than a child's delight in things bright and beautiful. In Neo-Platonism we see the last attempt of the Greek philosophers to establish monism; to the Neo-Platonists the antagonism between spirit and matter was distinctly apparent, and the method by which they sought to unite these two opposites showed a marked advance in their intellectual power; they conceived that the ground of union lay behind this dualism. Plotinus was the most celebrated exponent of this school, and under his guidance dualism was explained away by mystical references to a Pure Being, One and Indivisible, which was at once the beginning and the end of all things. Neo-Platonism was not a perfect monism, because Plotinus and his followers were at war with the body. The expression of the perfect monistic idea with respect to the connexion between body and soul is to be found in a verse from R. Browning's "Rabbi Ben Eyra":

" . . . Let us not always say  
 Spite of this flesh to-day  
 I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!  
 As the bird wings and sings  
 Let us cry, 'All good things  
 Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!'"

The hope that by the mortification of the flesh the soul would advance in holiness, has been from all times one of the extremes into which thoughtful men seeking peace have fallen. With the dawn of Christianity Greek philosophy languished and died, though Christianity did not fight with philosophy but with prejudice in the earliest days of its life. This new religion was held to be a special and direct revelation from God, yet in its cardinal doctrine we find the very thought that men had been for so long striving after, namely, the reconciliation between spirit and matter, between man and that God who had always seemed so very far away. It was not as if Christ was a leader of men simply by reason of a superiority in His manhood alone, but because He claimed to be divine, in the same sense that God is divine, and because of this claim, because of the astonishing greatness of this claim, Christianity has been especially open to endless attacks and to severe adverse criticism. If we hold that the intellect of man is his most godlike attribute, we will be very ready to believe that by his unaided intellect he would naturally attain to certain truths, which, when a direct revelation should come from God, would be seen to be the foundations upon which that revelation would be built; this would not come as a strange and foreign idea thrust upon man from without. Christianity came, taking hold of and making real that shadowy idea of a unity in opposites which had been so dimly apprehended by man. True, it introduced a greater amount of mysticism than the generality of men could grasp; but to coun-

terbalance this, there was the manhood of Christ, His very practical life, and His care of all things pertaining to the bodies of men. If this wonderful mode of reconciling the material and the spiritual could only have been appreciated by the followers of Christ,—religion would never have lost its philosophical side, and the unfortunate antagonism between the two would not have occurred: but almost immediately upon the death of Christ we find His disciples condemning the knowledge and wisdom of men. If Christ's religion is to spread and increase amongst all nations, as prophesied by its founder, its position must be strengthened on all sides. It must be the religion of the literary and the learned as well as of the simple and ignorant; it must have its roots in ethics, in philosophy, in art, and in science. The best proof that it underlies all things intellectual, physical, and moral is found in the fact that its truths can be reached by other than the beaten paths of revelation. St. Paul, when preaching to the Athenians, desired that they should understand the close relation existing between men and God; he could find no better way of expressing himself than by quoting to them the words of their own poet Cleanthes, "We, too, His offspring are." Bishop Lightfoot writes: "We might 'imagine ourselves listening to a Christian divine when we read in the pages of 'Seneca that 'God made the world because He is good,' and that 'as the good 'never grudges anything good, He therefore made everything the best possible,'" and sayings very similar to those we find in the writings of Plato. We are even reminded of the words of Christ: "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father 'which is in Heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother," when we read in Seneca, "Between good men and the gods there exists a friendship,—a friendship do I say? Nay, rather a relationship and a resemblance." Scores of passages could be cited from the writings of Seneca and others of the sages teaching precisely the same ethical doctrine, and having the same mystical meaning as the teachings of the disciples of Christ. Heaven and Hell were not first made known to man by the revealed word, there is the Olympus and Hades of the Ancients, materialistic in conception, it is true, but not more so than the Heaven and Hell of Dante. The immortality of the soul is not an essentially Christian doctrine, it was held by the Egyptians and the Assyrians at a very early date. Of course, it is not contended that all these doctrines and ideas were presented in as pure a form as Christ presented them, but the minds of men had been travelling towards them naturally, and philosophy had long been conscious of the idea which showed itself as the core, the very essence of Christianity. It remained for Hegel, that great monistic philosopher, to unite the Christianity of the spiritualists with that of the philosophers.

It may be said that thought at the present day has been so saturated by Christian spiritualism that it is impossible for Christian truths to be reached by independent means, but this cannot be maintained with regard to such a philosopher as Hegel; it must have been clear to him that only by emptying his mind of all preconceived ideas could pure philosophical truth be attained to. If the preconceived

ideas were true ones, then the mind would be guided back to them by the light of reason. It was not from clinging remnants of revelation that Hegel built up a monistic philosophy and a religion which in its last analysis was Christian truth. Kant, Jacobi, Fichte, and Schelling were Hegel's immediate predecessors in philosophy; their aims were similar to his, but their systems were not so successful: they stumbled and fell into the pitfalls of dualism.

There is one important thought in Fichte's philosophy, however, which is worthy of note here; Schwegler explains it in the following words: "It is reason—able to expect on the part of God, as moral regent of the universe, the communication to men of pure moral principles through the medium of the senses, or the revelation of Himself as lawgiver to them by means of a special and appropriate manifestation in the world of sense. An actual revelation would be here, then, a postulate of practical reason." Both Fichte and Schelling occasionally drew very near to the monistic goal which Hegel so triumphantly reached. Fichte, when he speaks of the necessary union between God and man, and of the important part played by Renunciation in the life of man, and Schelling when he teaches that "unless there be a dark ground, a nature, a negative principle in God, there can be no talk of a consciousness in God." Again, "Naturalism would think God as ground [immanent], theism as cause of the world [transcendent], the truth is the union of both characters, God is at once cause and ground." But they only touched on those thoughts, rose to them, as it were, by intuition; it remained for Hegel to incorporate them into a definite system of philosophy. It was by profound study and much painful thought that Hegel reached the fundamental axiom of his philosophy. He saw clearly that it was on the rock of dualism that all previous philosophical systems had been wrecked: Christianity itself was in some danger from the same cause.

All along the line philosophers had fallen either into materialism or idealism, and earnest thinkers into dogmatism or atheism. Idealism was no cure for materialism, nor blind, unreasoning faith for scepticism. The unity of opposites then was the foundation upon which Hegel determined to build up his philosophy; he set himself "to show that the kingdom of nature and spirit are one in spite of all antagonism," nay more, "that this antagonism itself is the manifestation of their unity."

Touching the success of this theory in the province of metaphysics, we find Hegel's system of logic quite able to make good the position which he took up. The old difficulty between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge disappears before the magic of this logic. There had been an attempt to reconcile the theories of Leibnitz and Locke by a compromise, viz., that we receive facts from without but that the corresponding ideas are within; Hegel saw the inadequacy of the compromise,—he was of course aware of the opposition, but behind this opposition he discovered a unity,—*a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge was one and the same thing, only viewed from different standpoints. The relation of the object thought to the

subject thinking is found in the evolution of the mind, for the subject thinking receives *a posteriori* knowledge by virtue of a process of evolution and so transcends the opposition between fact and ideas. Hegel asserted that all other metaphysical difficulties would be solved by the same monistic principle, as also could the difficulties in science; but with regard to these latter he realised that there was a very "hard husk" to break through, yet he was quite sure of the principle. He writes: "The nature of the universe, hidden and shut up in itself as it is at first, has no power which can permanently resist the courageous efforts of the intelligence, the world is intelligible, as it were, and is in union with our intelligence." Now when we come to view this fundamental doctrine of Hegel's, namely, the Union of Opposites, from a religious standpoint,—for any truth seeking to be universal must sooner or later justify itself to religion,—we find it in full concord with the purest and best religion that the world has ever seen, the religion of Christ. The unity of God and man is the kernel of Christian truth, Christ in His person being at once God and man, the two opposites, the Divine and Human closely connected, merged in Him. If that is the central truth of Christianity, and no Christian can deny it, the central truth of Hegel's philosophy is identical with it. He did not arrive at this perfect reconciliation by the study of Revelation, he did not seek to force the connexion, but steadily followed the glimmering light of truth till it broke into a glorious day. Moreover, when Hegel brings his fundamental doctrine into the realm of man's ethical and spiritual life, it meets with the same signal success. He, with logical reason for his guide, reached the same conditions as do the theologians who believe themselves led by the spirit of God in an especial and peculiar way. In company with the mystics and the divines, Hegel saw a very lucid and real meaning in the words which form the centre of Christian truth: "For whosoever would save his life shall lose, and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake, shall find it." Is this not the essential point, the innermost meaning of his philosophy? In man's life there is the positive and the negative, the self and the not-self, the two opposites with their ground of union—God. If we die to what is particular, to what is individual, we shall be born again to what is universal, to what is God-like; this, then, is the meaning of "dying to live." It is not the denying of one part of ourselves in order to fully realise the other part; but it is a dying to everything that is divided, partial, or contradictory, in order to live in unity and in God. Here, then, we have the essential doctrine of Christianity proved by a logical and philosophical method. Men are every day becoming more and more intellectual, more logical, more reasoning; man's intellect has discovered for him thousands of the wonderful secrets belonging to nature; to his intellect he owes his exalted life, art, literature, and science. Can he throw away this trusty staff on the threshold of his religious life and say he has no further need of it? No, he cannot. Christianity must be grasped not only by the emotional, spiritual side of man's nature, but by his reason and his intellect. Hegel has shown us how this can be done, his philosophy is all-embracing, monistic, true; he not only can find room

for the beautiful and the good in art, nature, and conduct, but he has a place for the evil and the ugly, behind all things there is the Eternal One. His religion does not admit into it the idea of an everlasting fight between God and Satan, nor his philosophy, the idea of a war between matter and spirit. If it required the gift of inspiration to write the Gospels and Epistles, no less does it require the same gift to understand the dark sayings in the Old Testament. Hegel, then, must have received that gift, for those strange words in Isaiah are philosophical truths to him : "I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness ; I make peace and create evil ; I, the Lord, do all those things."

EMILIA DIGBY.

TICEHURST, SUSSEX.

#### INDIA—RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, SOCIAL—OF 1895.

##### I.

The White City has disappeared. The show of industry and art has vanished from sight. The august gathering of the Parliament of Religions lasted for a few days and ultimately dissolved. But the practical results of these movements live and are felt by us in whatever direction we turn our attention. The year 1893 gave to America congresses on politics, religion, science, and what not, all of them within a short space of six months. India is slowly passing through a similar condition, and the year 1895 will live in the memory of her people as being full of memorable events, religious, political, and social.

The growth of a nation, in order to be healthy, must include all phases of its life. The abnormal growth in one direction brings on diseases which are difficult to cure. Undue attention paid in India for centuries to the formal side of religion brought on subjection, incapacity to cohere as a nation, and many social evils. Happily, under the British Government, the study of history and politics has brought a large portion of the educated people of India to their senses, and the result is that India, at the beginning of 1896, is totally different from the India of 1857.

The great religious event of the last year is the Dharma-Mahotsava—the Religious Assemblage—held at Ajmere, in Rajputana, on the 26th, 27th, and 28th of September. Religious gatherings have taken place in India in the past on different lines. The Council of Ashoka, held in the third century before Christ, was an assemblage of Buddhist priests only. Neither the Jains, nor the Brahmins, nor other sects prominent in those times were invited to attend. The religious gathering of Akbar, the enlightened Mohammedan emperor of the sixteenth century was more cosmopolitan, indeed, but the number of religions represented was a small one, and,